

Obesity and Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

Those who are obese (adults with a “body mass index” of 30* or greater) could be at higher risk for complications from influenza, including pandemic H1N1 influenza. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is investigating whether immunization protocols and treatment should differ for obese individuals. There are certain steps everyone should take to prevent flu transmission:

Avoid close contact. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

Stay home when you are sick. Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.

Cover your nose and mouth. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

Wash your hands often. Washing your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

Get vaccinated. Check with your health care provider about a yearly flu vaccine and the pneumococcal vaccine.

Along with these steps, the following are practices individuals can employ to work toward a healthy weight and a strengthened immune system:

Eat nutritious foods by following the food guide pyramid. Consume a variety of nutrient-dense foods within and among the basic food groups emphasizing fruits and vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk. Choose foods that limit the intake of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, added sugar, salt and alcohol. www.mypyramid.gov/


Be physically active. Consult your physician before undertaking a new physical activity program. For overall health, 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity is recommended. All adults should avoid inactivity. Adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits. Visit INShape Indiana’s website for resources and advice on developing a plan: www.inshape.in.gov or www.health.gov/paguidelines/

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Reduce stress. Increasing activity level will also help with stress reduction, as will confiding in a friend or family member, or seeking outside help if needed.

For more detail on managing the stresses of daily life, go to:

www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/MY00435

Get quality sleep each night. A minimum of 7-8 hours of sleep is recommended for the average adult. Those who have trouble sleeping can improve the rest they get by establishing a sleep schedule, turning off the television, avoiding physical activity close to bedtime, and keeping the bedroom a comfortable temperature. For more tips go to:

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/healthysleepfs.pdf

*Body Mass Index Calculator can be found at:

www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html



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